

THE INFLUENCE OF ZIONISM ON THE ISRAELI ARMY

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CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Israeli Army	2
Chapter 2: Zionism	12
Chapter 3: Zionism as an Influence on the Israeli Army	19
Footnotes	25
Bibliography	29

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to determine the degree to which Zionism has been significant as a motivating factor contributory to the success of the Israeli Army. The inquiry was conducted by means of library research. The research shows that the influence of Zionism on the Israeli Army is demonstrably significant. This shows that religious faith and spiritual values have contributed to the success of a modern military force. Therefore, these elements must still be considered important in any analysis of national power.

Introduction

On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel proclaimed itself established. Already, there was war with the Arabs all around, and ever since, hostility between Israelis and Arabs has seethed. There have been three wars. The Israelis have won them all, thoroughly and decisively. Indeed, as one analyst has put it: "From a military point of view the outstanding aspect of 22 years of warfare between Arabs and Jews is the remarkable superiority of the latter in military skills."^{1*} Surely, though, more than military skill is required in order to win wars. The most skillful soldier is useless until he is motivated to fight. Any analysis of national or combat power must include a careful consideration of popular values, morale and other such intangible factors.

This paper will attempt to show that the remarkable success of the Israeli Army has been to a large degree the result of the fact that it is comprised of highly motivated soldiers. Further, it will attempt to prove that this motivation is inextricably related to the phenomenon called Zionism. Thus, I hope to disclose that the success of Israeli arms has been in fact the result of motivation that is largely religious and that therefore, religious faith and spiritual values are still important in the analysis of any nation's power.

*Footnotes appear at the end of the paper (see pages 25 to 28)

Chapter 1

The Israeli Army

The modern Israeli Army was formally established on 28 May 1948.² But, it had existed for a long time before that, and a brief review of how this force came into being and the degree to which it has been successful is essential if one is to understand what has motivated it.

Jews have fought in all modern wars. An all-Jewish unit fought at Waterloo.³ In World War I, there was a Zion Mule Corps, and later, a Jewish Legion.⁴ Veterans from these units went to Palestine and there found military organizations already in existence in which to use their skills. For, by 1914, Zionist-sponsored colonies in Palestine had formed associations, called Shomrim (Watchmen), to protect their settlements.

After the war, Jewish immigration increased and so did the need for protection. Initially, the Arabs were apathetic to the influx of Jews. But, ever more of them came. Jews purchased land from absentee landlords which led to the eviction of Arabs. Conflict was inevitable, and when it came to pass in 1929, the Shomrim were developed into the Haganah, the Jewish Self-defense Force.

This military organization (later augmented by two much smaller and primarily terrorist organizations, the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the "Stern Gang") was destined to become the Israeli Army. It was an underground and illegal organization. But, it persisted and grew. During World War II, it was intention-

ally developed into a formidable army, as the following shows:

The Palestine Jews clearly knew what they wanted. They were determined to have their own combat-hardened army, which they believed they would put to effective use after the war.... By 1945 the number of Palestine Jews in the British armed forces and those in the paramilitary and police units in Palestine numbered altogether some 60,000 men and women. Almost all belonged to the still illegal Haganah, which had been forged during the war into a well-organized...army with a striking force, a static defense force, and reservists.⁶

Thus, the Jews possessed a force with which to fight in 1947. Nevertheless, it seemed incredible that Israel could survive, especially when the British departed and the unofficial conflict became an open war. In any case, the Arabs were confident of easy victory, as is evident from Thomas Sugrue's Watch for the Morning:

The Arab press and the Arab radio promised daily that after May 15 the Jews would be pushed into the sea; those who did not wish to drown could stand and be shot. The armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Trans-Jordan were ready to march, and Saudi Arabia and Yemen were prepared to send troops; the 600,000 Jews in Palestine were bounded on the West by the Mediterranean and elsewhere by 32,000,000 hostile Arabs.⁷

But, this massive Arab threat never really materialized. As of 15 May, the opposing forces were numerically very similar. 19,000 Israelis were opposed by 23,000 Arabs. However, the Arab armies were far better equipped. "[They] mercilessly outgunned the Israelis on every front. They also had fighter planes and bombers of a sort. The Israelis had scarcely any artillery and no modern aircraft...and no armour whatsoever."⁸ Nevertheless, the Israeli forces survived until a

UN-imposed truce in June, during which much was done to offset the original imbalance in armaments. After the truce, "they now had some tanks, some artillery, many mortars and sufficient small arms...the Israeli Army now packed a punch."⁹ It packed enough to win. Before long, the vaunted Arab Legion of Trans-Jordan had been fought to a stalemate in Jerusalem. Syria was defeated in the north and Iraqi troops forced to withdraw. Egypt was defeated in the south. The first war was over.

Almost immediately, Arab leaders began talking about a "second round". Egypt in particular persisted in maintaining loud belligerence. There continued between Egypt and Israel a pattern of infiltrations, border raids, reprisals, bombings, accusations and denunciations. Then, "...Nasser announced on September 27, 1955 that an arrangement had been concluded with Czechoslovakia to obtain arms in exchange for cotton.... Subsequently, at least two hundred MIG jet fighters, one hundred tanks, six submarines, and varying amounts of artillery, smaller arms, and ammunition were obtained."¹⁰ Israel was threatened, and her reaction to the threat was expressed well by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in November of 1955. In his diary, General Dayan quotes the following segment of Mr. Ben-Gurion's speech:

The government of Israel is ready faithfully to respect the Armistice Agreements.... But this duty is also binding on the other party. An agreement which is violated by the other side will also not be binding on us.... If our rights are assailed by acts of violence on land or sea, we shall reserve freedom of action to defend those rights in the most effective manner. -- We seek peace -- but not suicide.¹¹

The tension continued to mount. Egyptian terrorist incursions into Israel increased. On 24 September, General Dayan wrote as follows:

The Arab public regard terrorism against Israel as a part of an obligatory national war. It helps satisfy their yearning for vengeance and restores something of their honor.... There can be no doubt that ...the only means we have to bring about a stoppage on their attacks on Israeli civilians is sharp army action....¹²

When Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal and denied its use and the use of the Straits of Tiran to Israel, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion apparently decided that it was time to sacrifice peace to avoid suicide. General Dayan's army went into action.

Israel invaded the Sinai peninsula. One hundred hours later, her forces were within ten miles of the Suez Canal, having lost only 174 killed and four captured while killing over 100 Egyptians and capturing 6000!¹³ Egypt lost most of the arms only recently acquired. Also, again, Egyptian soldiers were no match for the Israelis. And, when France and England joined in the war -- to re-establish control of the canal -- Egypt was utterly crushed.

But, the victory was short-lived. World opinion was solidly against the winners. Soviet and U. S. pressure compelled the evacuation of all occupied territory. Thus, little was gained by anybody. Still, once again, the Arabs had been thoroughly beaten and their yearning for vengeance increased accordingly.

The old pattern of raids and reprisals was resumed, many

such being carried out by members of al-Fatah, a society of Arabs dedicated to regaining Palestine. Border incidents in the south and on the Syrian frontier became common. In Jordan, Hussein pledged his army in any war against Israel. Syria was threatening too with Iraqi troops already in that country, ready to fight. Israel was in serious danger again, and, when Nasser again cut off Israeli trade through the Red Sea and demanded that the UN peace-keeping force withdraw, it must have seemed again to be a choice between war or suicide. As Mr. Fisher writes, "...Nasser had begun to mobilize...even before the United Nations Emergency Force withdrew. Coupled with his bellicose public speeches and the tone of Cairo Radio, the concentration of Egyptian forces east of the Suez Canal compelled Israel to act."¹⁴

The action was sharp and devastating. Suddenly, on 5 June 1967, the Israelis struck. It was a total surprise. Virtually all the aircraft of Egypt, Syria and Jordan were destroyed on the ground. In only six days, hard and perfectly coordinated attacks seized the entire Sinai peninsula, the Golan Heights and all of Jordan west of the Jordan River. So impressive was this victory, that one military writer has declared, "They staged in their week of war...some of the outstanding military operations of the 20th. century."¹⁵ Overwhelmingly, Israel had won again.

Why have they done so well? There are many reasons, of course, and it is proper to mention some of the more important before dealing in detail with the one this paper will analyze.

For example, in 1948, the Haganah was replete with veterans of World War II. The Arabs were much less experienced. Furthermore, the Jewish soldiers were well organized and aware of the fact that they were fighting for survival. The whole new nation was united and totally committed to retaining the statehood only just gained. On the other side, there was no unity at all. Edgar O'Ballance declares that only Trans-Jordan was fully committed to this war.¹⁶ Sydney Fisher goes so far as to say that the Arab States were actually working against each other:

Egyptian forces aimed at Jerusalem with the intention of having the honor of capturing the Holy City and incidentally getting there before Abdallah did. Furthermore, Egyptian plans were to hold back until the Arab Legion and the Hashimite forces had been bled white and then come in for the victory and possession of Palestine. Although in urging the war in Palestine each state signed the accord that no part of Palestine would be annexed to another Arab state, none intended to uphold that agreement.¹⁷

Moreover, the truces worked to Israel's advantage. While they served to intensify the feuds among the Arab leaders, they allowed the Israelis to manage a massive increase in the size of their army and the amount of their equipment. For example, on 15 May, Israel had 35,000 troops. On 12 October, the number was 80,000. Also, 22,000 rifles had been increased to 60,000; the number of machine-guns was more than doubled; and finally, there was some artillery.¹⁸ All this helps to explain the Israeli victory in 1948. And, in 1956 and 1967, it was obviously a splendidly trained and superior modern army that did so well, the offensives of which were plainly, "well-

planned, skillfully led, and swiftly carried through...."¹⁹

But more than that! In all three wars, the soldiers of Israel were also splendidly motivated. They accomplished extraordinary feats that cannot be adequately explained by calling attention to disunited enemies and Israeli training and equipment. The only adequate explanation is that these men and women also were moved by convictions, beliefs and values which drove them to sacrifice and endure and win. This is a point of view that is widely shared. David Ben-Gurion has declared that in the establishment of the Jewish state, the victory of Jewish over Arab arms played a great and decisive role, but the root and origin of this victory lay in the moral and spiritual [emphasis not in original] superiority of the Jewish defenders.²⁰ Historians and military analysts agree. Jon and David Kimche wrote: "...Emergent Israel had one instrument which the Arabs lacked -- the spirit [emphasis not in original] of the Haganah. It was this that...gave the Israelis the advantage".²¹ Brigadier Barclay says, "Although military factors have played a part, Israel's military prowess is due mostly to moral qualities."²² Referring to the Israeli victory in 1956, Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall has written: "They did it more on nerve than with fire and deception."²³ He describes the assault into the Sinai desert with these words:

The Sinai wastes virtually prohibit military movement Even so, the brigades went at the barrier, some of them moving on city buses and ice trucks, for lack of combat carriers. Against fire, these soldiers traveled faster and farther in less time than regiments have ever moved before. It was a triumph, less

of motorization than of mobility wrought with human nerve and muscle.²⁴

Nor was this spirit dulled by 1967. Regarding that war, Jac Weller writes: "Israeli tank crew superiority was due, in part, to the nature of the individual members. The Israelis had a courage and patriotism that made them try harder and more unselfishly."²⁵

Perhaps the most consistent demonstration of unusually effective motivation within the Israeli Army is the quality of its leadership. Leaders at all levels are frankly expected to take risks and really lead. According to one Israeli soldier: "...it is the task of...commanders to lead their men under fire; the order of assault is 'After me'."²⁶ Of course, this is costly in lives. Half of all the Israelis killed in the Sinai in 1956 were young commanders.²⁷ Indeed, sometimes this audacity gets out of hand. Once, in 1956, an armored Brigade incurred unnecessary casualties in a premature attack. General Dayan lamented this mistake, but then could not resist adding, "...I could not avoid a sympathetic feeling over the hastening of the Brigade into combat.... Better to be engaged in restraining the noble stallion than in prodding the reluctant mule!"²⁸ Nor, again, is this a thing of the past only. The following was written in 1971:

Israeli tank doctrine...calls for an identity of command and actual physical leadership through battalion level.... The commanding officer's tank always goes first in an assault.... Another unusual responsibility of leadership in Israeli armor is the custom of having at least the tank commander's hatch open, even when passing through hostile towns.

There is nothing written in this connection. It is costly in lives, but eliminates the loss of entire tanks and their crews to enemy "blind side" attacks.²⁹

Inevitably, this climate of leadership has produced acts of uncommon valor. The Kimches tell of a company commander in 1948, whose unit was forced to retreat in the battle of Qastel near Jerusalem. His order was: "All privates to retreat immediately towards Nahlat-Yitzhak. Platoon and section commanders will remain to give covering fire." Only one NCO managed to survive. The company commander was found dead at his machine-gun post.³⁰ Again, General Dayan tells of one Israeli soldier, whose overpowering drive to serve outlasted his term of service:

Yirmi (Lt. Yirmeyahu Burdanov) had been demobilized long before, but they used to call him from time to time to take part in actions.... To this operation (action against the Kalkiliah police fort, 10 October 1956) he came without being asked. Soon after the start of the action...he and I bumped into each other -- literally. Seeing him there was unexpected; but I was not surprised. I knew that many paratroop officers after leaving the army...turn up whenever there is an action in order "to give the youngsters a hand". When the assault unit had started moving towards the police fort, Yirmi had sneaked out...and joined them. When news came through of the grave plight of the blocking unit, Yirmi had climbed aboard the first half-track of the rescue force and had led the convoy to it. On their return, when it was discovered that one vehicle was stuck at Sufin, Yirmi had ordered the driver of his carrier to turn back. And it was he, still dressed in his civilian clothes, who got down and tied the tow-cable to the damaged half-track. His white shirt had attracted the Legionaires' fire, and a machine-gun burst had caught him in the belly.³¹

Perhaps General Dayan was thinking of Yirmi again, when he wrote: "The real strength of the paratroop units lies not in their tanks, nor in their artillery nor in their vehicles,

but in the men themselves".³²

The preceding proves nothing conclusively. But surely it is enough to show that something has motivated Israeli fighting men in a manner that must be called unusual.

Chapter 2

Zionism

In any consideration of anything connected with Israel, one is soon confronted by the phenomenon of Zionism, for "Israel is first and foremost the creation of Zionism."³³ But then, with what is one confronted? A political movement? Nationalism? A religious faith? Something cultural?

Whatever it is, Zionism involves the return of Jews to the Promised Land, and that makes of it a most ancient movement. Some say that the first Zionist was the Psalmist who wrote: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Jerusalem.... If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!"³⁴ Others could write that it was Isaiah, who prophesied, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return ...to Zion."³⁵ But really, long before, Jacob and Joseph required that their remains be returned to their land of Canaan.³⁶

Thus, in any case, it is plain that Jews have yearned to return to their land for millenia. They believe themselves to be descendants of Abraham, to whom God gave this land.³⁷ They lost it when they were deported to Babylon and regained it when Cyrus allowed them to return. They were free for a while under the brave Maccabees. But, ultimately they fell under the rule of Rome. In 70 A. D. and again in 135 A. D., there were revolts against Rome. They were crushed and the Jews were scattered to the ends of the earth. But, in all this dispersion, there remained alive the yearning for their Holy

Land. Mr. Lehman writes that Jews in every generation pledged not to forget Jerusalem and Eretz Israel.³⁸ The yearning to return was expressed as a part of their most sacred occasions. "[At the close of the Seder] everyone joins in a chorus -- 'L'shanah Ha-Ba'ah Birushalayim -- next year in Jerusalem'. So it was last year in the Jewish home, here and all over the world. It was the same the year before, and for centuries, back through the ages...."³⁹

To make a return to the Holy Land a part of a sacred ceremony like this suggests that Zionism may be a religious matter. And, for many Jews, especially Eastern European Jews, it certainly was. They were taught to pray daily for the coming of the Messiah, who would lead Jews back to Zion. Robin Maugham suggests that this faith sustained the Jews for centuries and seems to say that it is a part of the belief of all Zionists:

The Zionists believe that they have an historic connection with Palestine.... The swarms of Jews in the Ghetto of Eastern Europe always felt themselves represented by the remnant of their race who were keeping a foothold in Palestine against the day of the coming of the Messiah. Their belief in...their eventual return to Palestine mainly accounted for the courage and tenacity with which the dispersed Jews clung to their faith and endured persecution.⁴⁰

It is also a fact that modern, active Zionism arose in Eastern Europe and as an effort on the part of Jews of the sort described by Maugham above. In 1881, Tsar Alexander II was assassinated and Jews were blamed. The pogroms began. And, in 1882, the Manifesto of Bilu was promulgated, which declar-

ed, "...we want a home in our country. It was given us by the mercy of God; it is ours as registered in the archives of history.... Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and our land Zion is our one hope".⁴¹ Likewise motivated by the pogroms in Russia, already in 1881, Leo Pinsker wrote that the only solution to the problem was for the Jews to take their fate into their own hands and seek to establish a state of their own.⁴² There was even some immigration into Palestine prior to 1900. According to Leonard Stein:

The Back to Palestine Movement did not start with the Zionist Organization. In the early 1880's Societies known as Choveve Zion ('Lovers of Zion') had sprung up in Eastern Europe, and under their auspices Jews had been trickling into Palestine for some fifteen years,⁴³ before the Zionist Organization came into existence.

But, there was something new about these immigrants. These "...were men whose faith was national rather than religious, and whose purpose in the Holy Land was not to pray and die but to work and live."⁴⁴

At this very opportune time, there arose a Zionist leader who would transform the movement into something very nationalistic. His name was Theodor Herzl and he is revered by Jews as the father of modern Zionism. Herzl was an Austrian. But it was in Paris, where he was working as a journalist, that the event occurred that was to change his life and ultimately have an effect upon millions. The French (but also Jewish) Army Officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was fraudulently convicted and publicly humiliated. Herzl witnessed this. At the scene, the following took place:

[Herzl] ...turned...to one of his colleagues of the press [and asked]: "Why are they so delighted...? Granted he is a traitor -- but a traitor is still a human being." His colleague replied: "No, the French...see him not as a human but as a Jew.... Christian compassion ends before it reaches the Jew." It was at this moment that Herzl's Zionism was born.⁴⁵

His Zionism aimed at the creation of a Jewish state somewhere, the existence of which would be guaranteed by the world's great powers and in which anti-Semitism would at last be escaped. Herzl expressed all this in his famous pamphlet, Der Judenstaat, which was published in February of 1896. Really, the document proposed nothing very new. Herzl himself declared, "The idea which I have developed...is a very old one: it is the restoration of the Jewish State."⁴⁶ What was new, though, was the vigor and dedication with which this man worked for the fulfillment of the dream. He contacted other Jewish leaders. He brought a Zionist organization into being which met regularly to coordinate efforts and plan future moves. And, he talked to world leaders. The list of those whom he sought to win over to his point of view is enormously impressive: the Grand Duke of Baden, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire, Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the Emperor of Germany, the Grand Duke of Hesse (brother of the Tsarina), Abdul Hamid II, the King of Italy and Pope Pius X!

Herzl died in 1907. He had lived his life for his people and he knew it. A British Christian Chaplain recorded his dying words: "Grüssen Sie Alle von mir, and (sic) sagen Sie Ihnen, ich habe mein Herz-Blut für mein Volk gegeben".⁴⁷

But, what really did he accomplish? Mr. Lehman writes:

Failure seemed to issue from the many diplomatic labors of Herzl. In terms of practical, tangible results, there was nothing that could be labeled as real achievement.... Yet, history was to prove that Herzl's tremendous exertions had prepared the foundations for genuine achievement.⁴⁸

Herzl did indeed lay such a foundation. He was a catalyst that transformed a dormant desire into an active effort. Chaim Weizmann wrote of him: "...he...intuitively interpreted...the age-long yearnings of the humble and inarticulate."⁴⁹ Dr.

Stephen Wise wrote:

Herzl...came upon Jews disunited, fearful, hopeless. He spoke, he wrought, he led. And when he left the Jews to whom he had proclaimed a message of deliverance, they once again -- and, as we believe, forever -- became a people.⁵⁰

Others carried on Herzl's work, most notably Dr. Weizmann in England. The result of it was the Balfour Declaration.

We must recognize, though, that Herzl transformed Zionism in more ways than one. He was not a religious Jew, for one such would hardly ever have written as Herzl did in his diary, 7 June 1895: "The Exodus under Moses will bear the same relation to this thing as a Festnachtsingspiel by Hans Sachs to an opera by Wagner."⁵¹ And, so inclined, Herzl played down the religious side of Zionism. Indeed, referring to his influence, Alfred Lilienthal has lamented that since the first Zionist Congress, an organized political movement has replaced the Messiah in leading the Jewish people back to Palestine.⁵²

In any case, there was now a viable movement. Rich men provided financial support, such as the Barons de Rothschild.

Prominent men worked in its behalf. And, on 2 November 1917, a really great step was achieved. The Balfour Declaration was promulgated, which committed the government of Great Britain to the establishment of a "national home" for the Jews in Palestine. Then, when the war ended, more progress was made. Great Britain was given the Mandate over Palestine. And, as Mr. Fisher puts it:

Dr. Weizmann, Judge Brandeis, Rabbi Wise, Professor Frankfurter, and Mr. Sokolov watched over and advanced the cause of Zionism by shepherding the Balfour Declaration through the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to assure its incorporation in all final settlements for the Middle East.... Zionist dreams were achieved.⁵³

Let us say that one Zionist dream was achieved. Herzl's goal of winning the support of a world power for the Jewish home in Palestine was accomplished. But there was yet an enormous amount to be done before this would actually be the home of many Jews.

So, there was launched a massive effort to get Jews to emigrate to Palestine. The Jewish National Fund bought land there. One estimate puts the cost of Zionist development in Palestine between 1919 and 1939 at about \$400,000,000!⁵⁴ Beyond this, much could be said about the immigrations (the Jews count five separate Aliyot, or immigrations), but hopefully it will suffice to note a few figures. In 1920, there were 60,000 Jews in Palestine; in 1947, the number was 600,000.⁵⁵ The largest group, of course, had come from Central Europe, in flight from the Nazis. From 1932 until 1939, nearly 225,000 such Jews came into Palestine.⁵⁶ After the war, many

more came, even though the British prohibited it. They came however they could from DP camps in Europe. They came crowded on cattle boats. They came with or without British permission. Many died when their boats sank. Others were intercepted and forced to return whence they had come. But now -- after the ovens of Dachau and the rest of the Nazi effort at genocide -- to return to "the Promised Land" was more than a yearning or even a political movement. It was the irrepressible, if not invincible, demand of a people for a place of their own. Both the British and the Arabs resisted, but the former not for long. On 14 February 1947, Secretary Bevin announced that Palestine would be referred to the UN.⁵⁷ The UN voted for partition. The British left, and, and Israeli Proclamation of Independence followed: "With trust in the Rock of Israel, we set our hand to this Declaration...on the soil of the Homeland...on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, the fourteenth of May, 1948."⁵⁸ Now, one could say that Zionist dreams were achieved.

Chapter 3

Zionism as an Influence on the Israeli Army

The remarkable success of the Israeli Army has been due in part to excellent motivation. The movement known as Zionism must be recognized as a possible source of that motivation. To accomplish its purpose, this paper yet needs to give credence to the assertion that Zionism has motivated Israeli forces to a significant degree and that therefore, it is correct to conclude that in the success of Israeli arms, we have a useful, modern instance of effective religious, or, at least, spiritual motivation.

To get to these conclusions, let it first be known, that Zionism did not cease to function when Israel was born. Plainly, the basic Zionist yearning to return to the Promised Land has persisted. To the 650,000 Jews living in Palestine in May 1948 were added 1.25 million newcomers by 1965.⁵⁹ Moreover, it is a certainty that Jews today are still plainly aware of the inestimable value of the hard-won homeland. As Ben Halpern says, "Israel is conceived as the last stand of the Jewish people, for the Hitler era [has] shown that they [have] no safety they [can] rely on elsewhere."⁶⁰ An American Jew has written: "For Jews, after all, the classic paranoid nightmare of living in a murderous world...became a reality in our lifetime."⁶¹ Such comments show the continued need for Zionism and the perseverance of the movement. The fact is that just as Zionism was to so large a degree responsible for the

creation of the state of Israel, so also Zionism has been responsible for the preservation of that state. The procession from immigration and effort to establish the state to more effort and armed conflict in the defense of that state came to pass without any interruption. Thus, Zionism is, as much as it ever was.

Moreover, it follows inevitably that a strong tie between the Zionist movement and Israeli military effort must be recognized. For, how could a movement have so much to do with a state's establishment and then not be much involved in its immediate defense? Besides, there is much to indicate that Zionism has been much in the hearts and minds of Israeli soldiers. Hurewitz plainly states that Israel developed a military doctrine that called for the fusion of strategic, economic, and Zionist ideological purposes.⁶² Further, the influence of Zionist ideology can be seen in the words and deeds of fighting Israelis. Perhaps the following quotation will illustrate the point. These are the words of a doctor serving in besieged Jerusalem in 1948:

Dr. Laufer said, "You are right. We are lost.... But let us look at it this way. All men die. You and I have closed the eyes of many for the last time. We have thought the same thing -- there is no sense in dying; people die because they are old or sick, not for a purpose. But this time there is sense in dying. For two thousand years the Jews have lived for a dream. We are dying for it. We stand on the holiest spot in Jewry. If we escape from it, we will die somewhere else, for nothing. Could any of us hope to find more meaning for his death than is here tonight? This is our chance to make death sensible. Let us embrace it."⁶³

Again, in 1948, when the village of Degania seemed about to

fall to Syrian attackers, Ben-Gurion could spare no troops to bolster the defense. So, he sent one Moshe Dayan with two 65mm guns. Incredibly, after two hits from the guns, the Syrians withdrew. But, what is really significant is Dayan's evaluation of the event. He said there was no military justification for Ben-Gurion's order. It was "a Zionist decision - an act of faith".⁶⁴ More! How can the tenacious Israeli battle for Jerusalem in 1948 and again in 1967 be explained apart from Zionism? One of those Jews in the city declared, "Jerusalem for the Jews is more than a city; it is a soul."⁶⁵ Of course, this little paper can by no means prove that every Israeli soldier has always fought as a conscious Zionist. But, what has preceded should be enough to show that Zionism is a milieu in which the Israeli soldier has functioned and by which he could hardly fail to have been effected. Then, when it is added that the Israeli army intentionally uses Zionist approaches to indoctrinate troops, the motivational impact of it must be seen. And, the Israeli army does so use Zionism, as the following shows:

Before the establishment of the state, commitment to the national cause was built up through many years of indoctrination and practical work in the branches of the various Zionist groups throughout the world and in their movements in Palestine itself. Since then, the army has become the most important instrument for fulfilling that function wholesale among the masses of immigrants who had no previous acquaintance with Zionism.⁶⁶

I submit that the foregoing is sufficient to prove that Zionism has contributed significantly to the motivation of Israeli soldiers. I even wonder how many young Israeli command-

ers may have been moved by a line from a poem written by Israel Zangwill when Herzl died. It reads: "To save a people, leaders must be lost...."⁶⁷

But even if it is granted that Zionism has motivated Israeli troops, may one go a step farther and conclude that this has been religious motivation? A good many answer with a resounding "No!" Mr. Lilienthal admits that he is an anti-Zionist. Nevertheless, one cannot lightly discard his point of view. He writes: "Judaism has been a universal religious faith to which loyal citizens of any country could adhere. By contrast, Zionism is a nationalist movement organized to reconstitute Jews as a nation with a separate and sovereign homeland."⁶⁸ Safran says, "...Zionism...was not a religious movement.... It did not arise out of a religious impulse nor did it seek to meet some religious need."⁶⁹

It is possible, though, to answer these assertions. Regarding Mr. Safran's remarks, I must ask: was not the yearning to return to a land believed to have been promised by God a religious impulse? Was not the need to be free -- among other things -- to worship in a way which the majority considered alien a religious need? I don't know Mr. Safran's faith. But, I do know that of a rabbi who wrote the following to aid me in understanding Zionism:

You must try to understand how the Jew yearned for redemption and salvation throughout the centuries. Redemption meant redeemed from exile back to the land. Salvation meant saved from enemies who sought to destroy him. Christians usually think of salvation and redemption as being saved from sin and hell which is a totally different concept. Though the same words are

used, they do not mean the same thing.⁷⁰

Any movement which will describe its goals as "salvation" and "redemption" is to some degree religious! Nor is this the usage of rabbis only. In a speech to the House of Lords, 11 February 1937, one V. Z. Jabotinsky repeatedly referred to admission into Palestine as "salvation".⁷¹ Also, Mr. Lillenthal's position must be rejected, for his unobjective approach to the issue insists on an either/or analysis of something that can really only be understood in terms of both/and. Jewish religion, history, patriotism, culture, -- all these are intertwined each with the other. As Rabbi Barnett Brickner has written: "Judaism is not merely a faith, a cult, a religion in the Christian significance of these terms, but a civilization, a culture unique in its ethical and social emphasis."⁷² Bernard Lewis explains this combination of piety and patriotism very well, as follows:

Inevitably, like the nationalism of the Arabs, it [Zionism] became intermingled with what was deepest and most deeply felt in the minds and hearts of the people -- with their religion, their religious culture and identity, their mystical yearning for Zion. Zionist dreams and aims were focused on two things especially, on Hebrew and Palestine; that is on a language which the Jews did not speak, and on a country in which they did not live. But they were the Holy Language and the Holy Land, both made holy by the Bible, the very core of Jewish existence.⁷³

The point may be made like this: of course, Zionism is not exclusively religious. But, just as certainly, religion cannot be excluded from it. "For God and country" makes as much sense to an Israeli as it does to an American. Therefore, I

reach the conclusions which follow. The Israelis have fought well because of extremely powerful motivation. To some degree or in some form, Zionism has been at least a significant part of that motivation. And, Zionism is, at least in part, religious. Therefore, the three remarkable victories of this military force can be called valid modern instances of religious faith serving as effective military motivation. At least, if one will not call it religious, he must see it as spiritual motivation. The message seems to be this: fight for what is right; for what your soldiers sincerely believe is right. Then, they will win, if it is humanly possible, and possibly even if it is not. In any case, a useful lesson can be learned. The accomplishments of Israel stand as a mighty modern example of how the faith of a people contributed to the power of that people. From that, let it be learned that no nation, emerging or otherwise, can afford to ignore the power of its people's faith. For, whether the goal be defense against an external foe, internal development or whatever, in that faith is power which may well spell the difference between success and failure.

Footnotes

- 1 Brigadier Cyril N. Barclay, "Israel at War", Army, Vol. 21, No. 9 (September 1971) p. 41.
- 2 Edgar O'Ballance, The Arab-Israeli War 1948 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1957) p. 129.
- 3 Ibid., p. 15.
- 4 Emil Lehman, Israel, Idea and Reality (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1962) p. 116.
- 5 Ibid., p. 102.
- 6 J. C. Hurewitz, Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1969) p. 62.
- 7 Thomas Sugrue, Watch for the Morning (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950) pp. 199-200.
- 8 Jon and David Kimche, A Clash of Destinies (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1960) p. 162.
- 9 Ibid., p. 224.
- 10 Sydney N. Fisher, The Middle East, A History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969) pp. 702-703.
- 11 Major General Moshe Dayan, Diary of the Sinai Campaign (New York: Schocken Books, 1967) pp. 12-13.
- 12 Ibid., p. 23.
- 13 Lehman, op. cit., p. 211.
- 14 Fisher, op. cit., p. 671.
- 15 Jac Weller, "Israeli Armor: Lessons From the Six-Day War", Military Review, Vol. LI, No. 11 (November 1971) p. 44.
- 16 O'Ballance, op. cit., pp. 123-124.
- 17 Fisher, op. cit., p. 631.

- 18 Kimche, op. cit., p. 243.
- 19 Weller, op. cit., p. 44.
- 20 David Ben-Gurion, "The Kingdom of the Spirit", The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 208, No. 5 (November 1961) p. 87.
- 21 Kimche, op. cit., p. 16.
- 22 Barclay, op. cit., p. 45.
- 23 Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, "Why the Israeli Army Wins", Harpers, Vol. 217, No. 1301 (October 1958) p. 41.
- 24 Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, "The Young Army of Israel", The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 208, No. 5 (November 1961) p. 95.
- 25 Weller, op. cit., p. 45.
- 26 CCL Yvral Ne'eman, "The Unorthodox Israeli Army", Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. 45, no. 11 (November 1961) p. 35.
- 27 Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, "Why the Israeli Army Wins", Harpers, Vol. 217, No. 1301 (October 1961) p. 41.
- 28 Dayan, op. cit., p. 96.
- 29 Weller, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
- 30 Kimche, op. cit., p. 98.
- 31 Dayan, op. cit., pp. 51-52.
- 32 Ibid., p. 84
- 33 Nadav Safran, The United States and Israel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963) p. 2.
- 34 Psalm 134:1 and 5.
- 35 Isaiah 51:11.
- 36 Genesis 47:29-31 and 50:25.

³⁷ Genesis 12:7.

³⁸ Lehman, op. cit., p. 4.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁰ Robin Maugham, Approach to Palestine (London: The Falcon Press, Ltd., 1947) p. 21.

⁴¹ Walter Laqueur (ed.), The Israeli-Arab Reader (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1970) p. 4.

⁴² Safran, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴³ Leonard Stein, The Balfour Declaration (London: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., Ltd., 1961) p. 62.

⁴⁴ Bernard Lewis, The Middle East and the West (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967) pp. 22-23.

⁴⁵ Meyer W. Weisgal, Theodor Herzl, A Memorial (New York: published under the auspices of The New Palestine, 1929) pp. 67-68.

⁴⁶ Laqueur, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁷ Weisgal, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴⁸ Lehman, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴⁹ Weisgal, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁵² Alfred M. Lilienthal, What Price Israel (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953) p. 14.

⁵³ Fisher, op. cit., pp. 377-378.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 434.

⁵⁵ O'Ballance, op. cit., pp. 24 and 32.

- 56 Safran, op. cit., p. 69.
- 57 Laqueur, op. cit., pp. 107-108.
- 58 Ibid., pp. 127-128.
- 59 Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 364.
- 60 Ben Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969) p. 440.
- 61 Henry L. Feingold, "American Jews Confront New Challenges", The American Zionist, Vol. LXII, No. 1 (September 1971) p. 11.
- 62 Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 366.
- 63 Sugrue, op. cit., p. 234.
- 64 Kimche, op. cit., pp. 171-172.
- 65 Sugrue, op. cit., p. 198.
- 66 Safran, op. cit., p. 202.
- 67 Weisgal, op. cit., p. 12.
- 68 Lillenthal, op. cit., p. v (Foreword).
- 69 Safran, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
- 70 From personal correspondence between Chaplain (LTC) Seymour Moskowitz, a Jewish Chaplain, U. S. Army, and the writer.
- 71 Laqueur, op. cit., pp. 60-61.
- 72 Weisgal, op. cit., p. 264.
- 73 Lewis, op. cit., p. 91

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